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Subject: The Altars of Childhood Rebuilt.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE ALTARS OF CHILDHOOD REBUILT.

I propose to draw some instruction from a portion of the history contained in the 18th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings.

The 1st and 2d Books of Samuel, the 1st and 2d Books of Kings, and the 1st and 2d Books of Chronicles, are national histories. They belong to a system of things which has passed away.

An extract from the records of the House of Representatives, or of the Senate of the United States, would scarcely be regarded as sacred literature in our time; but among the Hebrews in early days there was no distinction between civil and religious life. To worship God and to serve the country were acts inseparable; and heresy, a departure from God, was a violation of the Constitution of the nation.

The records of the proceedings of kings, of courts, of magistrates, were also sacred records; because they were bound up and indissolubly united together. These books, therefore, that contain the history of the times of the judges of a crude and rude commonwealth, and of its transition into a monarchy; these books that contain the history of the rise and progress of the oriental monarchy of Solomon, glittering, hollow, corrupt,—these books are sacred to the Jews, because they are not, as our political records are, simply the unfolding of their exterior life, but the unfolding of their whole life.

In consequence of the great oppressions of taxation, and of the taking for the army of their sons, the kingdom, at the death of Solomon, revolted. Ten tribes went away, leaving only those in southern Judea to worship the true God; for very soon the fragments that went asunder from Judea were overtaken by idolatry.

After several reigns, we come to that of Ahab, who was one of the ablest and worst of sovereigns, and who had for his prime minister one of the ablest and worst of women that there is any record of in Scripture. He had married Jezebel out of a foreign country. She was the daughter of the King of Zidon, a Phœnician king.

She brought with her the worship of the Phœnicians—namely, the worship of Baal, of Ashtoreth, or of Astarte, as it is elsewhere called. What the precise worship of Baal was, we do not know, except that it was idolatrous and gorgeous. What the worship of Ashtoreth or Astarte was, they know who make themselves familiar with the worship of Venus.

In olden times, Ahab had become king of the ten tribes of Israel, led them away from the true God, and introduced a seductive, idolatrous worship, which filled up all the senses of the people with the gorgeousness of temples and altars multitudinous.

There was one altar of peculiar sacredness to the Hebrew mind, which had been erected to Jehovah in past generations. It had round about it a sanctity which has belonged to scarcely any other place except Jerusalem ; and that was the altar which stood on the eastern range of hills or mountains named Mount Carmel, which has an eastern slope of some six hundred feet, and a western slope of some sixteen hundred feet of elevation. It is a wooded hill, or succession of hills, blossoming, it is said, with almost every single plant known in the Orient. It is full of caves. Thousands are counted within it. It is a limestone range, filled with ravines and living springs.

On the eastern side, the outlook must have been grand ; for on the left, or toward the northeast, was the great plain of Esdraelon —the largest and richest plain in Palestine, and the gateway through which the East and the West communicated. The Phœnician commerce, passing over this great plain, and crossing the Jordan a little below the Sea of Galilee, was going to the Eastern nations beyond the plain, now a wilderness in the possession of a few wandering tribes of Bedouins, but then waving with harvests from end to end. On the west, or southwest, was the plain of Sharon, which was separated from Esdraelon by this very range of mountains.

On this range stood the altar of Jehovah which Ahab had broken down and destroyed—the most sacred, probably, of all the altars that remained—a memorial of antiquity—the witness of many sacred temples, and of many national transactions of the last degree of importance ; and in breaking it down Ahab had violated feelings of association and of patriotism, as well as that reverence which is due to religious instruments and places. It had been defiled and destroyed ; and all through the land swarmed the minions of Baal. More than four hundred and fifty there were, of the priests of Baal ; and of Astarte or Ashteroth there were four hundred “prophets of the groves,” as they were called. There were

some eight hundred and fifty of these priests in the upper part of Palestine, carrying on the gorgeous, dissolute worship of these foreign deities. And there was no organized opposition to them. There were a few priests remaining who attempted to be faithful; but Jezebel sent forth, and, with cruel hand, slew them right and left, wherever they could be found. A few had been hidden and saved—not many. But one or two dared to face the king and the queen, and acknowledge Jehovah. The name *Jehovah* was a name full of danger to those who had any connection with it personally, or through their national history.

And so Ahab, with Jezebel by his side, rode down the national customs and the national religion, and violated all the associations that should have been most sacred to the people; and there was no synagogue, there was no organized resistance of any kind; everything was dark and desolate and dissolute; and the kingdom seemed ready to perish.

Over the other side of the Jordan, where the land is full of hills and mountains, where it is rough and hard, but where there are numerous valleys teeming with population, is the country of Gilead; and there Elijah, the Tishbite, was born. More and more, the population originally constituting that part of the Jewish nation which took possession of the territory east of the Jordan had fallen into wandering and nomadic habits. More and more, they assumed the manners of wandering and nomadic tribes. Out from among these people came Elijah, who was by far the most dramatic character of the Jewish history; not the most influential man, but certainly the most impressive and startling. Doubtless, judging from some intimations that are given, he was tall, thin, of that peculiar hardy texture which indicates flesh, muscle and bone. Doubtless he had long black hair, and a dark eye, sunken beneath projecting brows.

This is not altogether fancy, but it is not history; it is only gathered, as it were, from probabilities and analogies: but doubtless this wild and nomadic creature, dressed in the rude habiliments of his people, wearing a skin cloak and a leather girdle about him, and walking with a long staff, such as mountaineers learn to use, was the figure that appeared upon the scene during the height of the prosperity of Ahab.

The early part of his history I do not propose to delineate, though it is eminently striking. Some few of the points of his later history I shall open to you in a moment.

There had been a great drought and famine; and Elijah was informed by the Lord that it was about to cease. Obadiah, who had

been a faithful servant of God, and who was the governor of Ahab's house, was chosen by Elijah to bear a message to Ahab. Obadiah protested that it would be as much as his life was worth ; and he gave as a reason the fact of his service to his people. Elijah reassured him, and told him that he himself would certainly appear before Ahab that day.

"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah."

It was not the first time that the stronger man wore no crown. There has been a time when Mazzini was stronger than Pope and King. There have been times when single men had more power than the whole government. And this man Ahab, crowned, throned, and supreme, when Elijah sent for him, went to meet him.

"It came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

Impudent fellow ! The man whose bloody hand had carried misrule and corruption and death to the institutions of his country —had he the face to say to this anointed prophet of God, Art thou he that troubleth Israel ?" Bad men, in power, never count their own abuses, but always those things which check them in their career, and attempt to bring reformation.

"He answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Brave man ! to stand face to face with the king and speak such words as those.

"Now, therefore, send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."

This was very summary. This was sovereignty indeed. Elijah had nothing but his staff and himself ; but a man's own self is sometimes more than armies. Here was the king, confronting this wild prophet from the wilderness. He knew him ; he had heard of his deeds ; he knew what power he had upon the imagination of the people, and upon their hearts ; and he obeyed him, and sent for the prophets.

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel."

The memorials of the old ruined altar were still there. It was around about that point—namely, the eastern termination of Carmel—that the tremendous scene about to be recounted took place.

It would be impossible for us now to send and bring all New England to any given place in the Eastern States, or to bring all

the inhabitants of the Middle States to any given point in those States ; but we are to recollect how simple life was then, and how different the whole social economy from what it is now. We are to recollect that men were moveable in masses, and could sustain themselves. We are to recollect that not one ten thousandth part of the retinue or expense which is occasioned by the complex civilization of modern times was necessary then. It was an easy thing for a region round about to pour in its thousands and hundreds of thousands of people ; for a little parched corn was all the food they needed, and they slept where the night found them.

“Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if Jehovah be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people [standing around, and looking at each other, and wondering what this boldness meant] answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord.”

The pathos of this we cannot understand. It must have touched a thousand thousand hearts with the tenderest feelings. They remembered the days of their fathers, and the service of the Lord, and the prophets that had been slain ; and when this bold man stood alone, with nothing but his staff, without armies, without attendants, and appealed to them, saying, “I am the only one that is left to represent your fathers’ God,” he touched a fountain in the bosom of this great people.

“I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord ; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.”

Now he proposes that they shall have a test ; and whatever men may think of miracles and marvels, no Grecian drama ever imagined so sublime a test-scene as that which follows.

“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock of themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord ; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”

At this, there was a rustle throughout the great crowd, and an enthusiastic outburst.

“And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.”

So now he had gained one point. He had brought the king face to face with him. Through the royal mandate he had assembled the masses of that great people. More than that, he had gathered together the eight hundred and fifty representative men of the new worship. He was the only living priest and prophet of Jehovah ; and there was the crowd of eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal and of the groves, or of Venus. He had propounded a test ; and they had accepted it. Whether they did it willingly or not, we do not know ; but the enthusiastic outcry of the people settled the matter.

"And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal [now more and more speaking as their master], Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under."

They went to their work with a good deal of alacrity.

"They took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made."

That is, they went into those excitements, those vehement enthusiasms, that half maniac state, with which the priests used to kindle their zeal.

"It came to pass at noon, that Elijah [who was all alone on that mountain edge] mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing [he is in the chase], or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

What was this mockery? Was it the ignoble triumph of a man conscious of his advantage over his adversaries? It was only a dexterous exposition to this great people of Israel of the sham that they were worshiping. It was only a brief and pictorial way of saying to them, "Here are the gods that have been imposed upon you, and that cannot be made to hear." He expounded the nature of their gods, as they must have been held by them.

"It came to pass, when mid-day was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

Now, as the evening was approaching, and the cool shadow of Carmel threw itself down over the crowd which had assembled, the prophet began to take himself unto his own proper and prophetic activity.

"Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me."

His heart yearned for them. And all the people crowded up.

"All the people came near unto him."

One of the most affecting of all things then happened. They saw him turn himself about and go up to the memorials of that altar which had been broken down and desecrated; and without help he lifted stone upon stone back into its place. He brought the scattered parts rudely together again, and rebuilded the altar of their God in the sight of all the people—the old altar, where their fathers had worshiped, and the generations before them—the altar that spoke to them of everything that was sacred in their history. Their chants, their psalms, their possessions, their journeys in the wilderness, their captivity in Egypt—all these things were grouped in their religious services; and this altar, though

built of stones that were unhewn (for it was not permitted to lift a tool upon material, to make an altar), brought to their minds most sacred associations.

"And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And they did it. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water."

There could be no concealed fire there—that was settled. There could be no trick, no illusion, no jugglery. They had had their time. They had had their altar, their offering, their incantations, and their ill success. He had gathered the old stones back to their place. A thousand hands filled the altar—for he had commanded the services of the people. He had imposed upon them the task of deluging the altar, and that which was upon it, with water, so that there should be no suspicion of any trick or any human power connected with the transaction.

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice [see how it touches all the points of memory in the people] that Elijah, the prophet, came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word."

There stood before him Ahab, the king, not knowing which way to look, nor what to do; and there stood the exhausted and vexed and disappointed army of priests, who wondered what would happen next; and there was the great hushed mass of the nation that were waiting, expectant.

"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

It was but a moment. It was like a vision of lightning.

"And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Is it strange that such an exhibition should produce such an effect? How skilfully every step had been taken! Though Elijah was assured in his own soul that he was about to have the interposition of God in his behalf, yet how wisely did he make his preparation! Every single step was a step toward this final result—the turning back of the hearts of the people to the memory of their own worship, to allegiance to their own Jehovah, and to the re-

establishment of the altars and of the services of the true Son of God. But now comes the scene that is even more astonishing.

“And Elijah said unto them, take the Prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.”

They were wrought up, now, to such a state of enthusiasm, and such was his ascendancy over the people, that they obeyed him instantly.

“And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”

Eight hundred and fifty there were of them, and he slew them mainly with his own hand. It is doubtful whether he was helped at all. A horrible deed! A horrible necessity! Ahab stood by and saw it all; but Jezebel was not there—she was at home. The next order of the prophet was almost a mockery.

“And Elijah said unto Ahab, get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel.”

I will not go further in opening the scene. The rain came, gathering a little cloud upon the east, which Elijah’s servant saw; and the blackness of the evening storm filled the whole heaven; and Elijah commanded the king to make haste and escape to the city, lest the storm should overtake him; and he himself ran with the chariot. Nimble as a deer, long breathed as a hound, he kept pace with the king’s horsemen, in that fiery ride; but stopped at the gates of Jessreel, too shrewd to go in. He could manage Ahab, but he was not a match for Jezebel.

Was it right for him to destroy these prophets? It is very certain that no man could do it in our day, on any ground whatever of rectitude; but our day could not produce such necessity. There could be no such exigency now as there was then. Such a man as Elijah could not be produced in our time. Men belong to their times. They are hewn out of the living strata, and are part and parcel of the age in which they live. Elijah belonged to his time, was fitted to it, and fashioned by it, and made to meet its grand necessities. What had they with which to reform a nation? There was not a school-house in all Palestine. There was not a printed book there. There was not a single place of instruction for the people. They were helpless before their despot. There was no preaching among them. There was no means of turning them back, except by producing an impression upon them which should affect their senses—the eye, the ear, and the heart. And it was a tremendous drama that was enacted upon this mountain-stage, where the abashed king stood, humbled before the prophet;

where the prophet, exalted into the intensity of a commanding manhood, was superior to the whole gathered host ; and where the eight hundred and fifty heathen prophets were as nothing before him. In this hour, he stood for all those instrumentalities by which, in modern times, we remove evil, and introduce good. In that day, there were none of these things, and what was done had to be done summarily. It was a question of life and death. Shall this people be seduced into idolatry through their lusts and appetites ? Shall they abandon not only Jehovah, but the worship of Jehovah ? Shall they be treacherous to their own constitution ? Shall the life of the nation be sacrificed ? Shall all hope of life be extinguished by the presence of a foreign worship, a foreign priesthood, not representing the old Jewish blood or the old Jewish ideas, but importing from a corrupt nation foul customs and obscene rites, and making the worship of God worse than a mockery ? And shall the prophet stand there, with the opportunity of destroying the whole nest of worms that were now swept into one bunch before him, and not improve it ? He struck ; and so would I have done if I had been he, and had stood there then ; and so would you—or if you had not, you would have been a dastard recreant. It was the question of breaking, or not breaking, the yoke of an ignoble captivity. There was a chance to strike tyranny to the heart ; and he struck.

Were the lives of those eight hundred and fifty men of great value, compared with the lives of millions of men who were to be emancipated by their destruction ? It was a terrible case. The whole people were being destroyed by Ahab. And if a heart like that of the prophet beat with patriotism ; if the intensity of his love for his own country was heightened by every association with the sanctity of his religion, it made it all the more imperative that strenuous means should be employed in bringing back the people to their own laws and customs, and to the true worship of Jehovah.

Now, consider how brief this work was. These people were called together in a most tremendous emergency. And suppose Elijah had sent them back to their homes, saying, “ Go and think of this ; go and talk it over, and come back again when the next week or the next month shall come round, and then let us take counsel together as to what shall be done to restore the true worship of the God of Israel ” ? The effect would all have been lost. It was when the enthusiasm was high, and the zeal was hot, that he must strike—then or never !

There are those who are opposed to excitement. There are those who are prejudiced against acting except after cool and mature

judgment. Unquestionably, all topics that lie in the range of intellectual activity are better judged of without the efflux of feeling than with it. If it is a question of arithmetic, of mathematics, of history, of physical properties, men do not want the disturbing influences of emotion to aid them in deciding it. But shall the poet be told to calm down his rapture before he writes, in order to write with judgment? Shall the prophet, in moments of inspiration, be called back to the cold regions of logic? When men are to be aroused on topics that involve moral and social truths, shall they be told to be cool? Is excitement other than normal when the truths to which men's attention is called are subject to the feelings?

The prophet aroused the hearts and consciences of the people on purpose. And was that the time for them to deliberate? Why should they have had an opportunity to think? They needed not to think. They were simply asked to seize the moment when all opposition was rolled away, to do the things which they had believed in from their childhood. They were merely asked to take those steps which should fortify them against returning idolatry, to commit themselves against a usurping government, to set their faces against the worship of foreign idols; and it was philosophical to do it.

Now, is it right, when men are gathered together in God's temples, to excite them on the subject of religious life? Some say, "Appeal to our judgment; appeal to our reason." What other appeal has been made since men were born? What source of knowledge does not appeal to their reflection? How are their thoughts trained and disciplined in all that pertains to manliness! They have been instructed over, and over, and over again. And when they have been, if I may so say, smothered under the burden of knowledge, is it not right that there should be the torch of inspiration to lift them to a higher life, and produce in them those joys which stand, or ought to stand, connected with the proper sequence of the instruction which they have received? And as the prophet did wisely avail himself of the moment of enthusiasm to bring his people back to their true allegiance, and to ratify it, so it is right for the preachers and teachers in our day to develop intense excitement, and in the moment of that excitement, to call on them, not to choose between doubtful things or unknown quantities, but to choose that way which their thoughts have been familiar with ever since they were children in the cradle; that way which their fathers and mothers taught them with tears; that way about which they have read in the Bible from their childhood up; that way which

they have had pointed out to them time and again in the village church. Do things which have constantly been before the mind, from the time when a man was five, or ten, or fifteen years old, need to be remanded to the court of investigation before he can decide them ?

There are in my presence, to-night, hundreds of men who have departed from the worship of the God of their fathers. Some of them have gone after Astarte ; some of them have gone after Baal ; they have been solicited, and have given way, on the right and on the left, and the laws of God have been broken down in their midst. There are men here to-night who have not been inside of a sanctuary of Jehovah before for years and years. Some chance, they say ; some providence, I say, has brought them hither on this occasion. There are those here who have not thought on religious themes for a long, long time, having been so completely absorbed by pursuits of business or pleasure, but to-night they have heard the songs of Zion ; their thoughts have been lifted up, and wafted away backward, and they are thinking of the hamlets and the green hills of their childhood, of the father and mother that prayed for them, and of the brothers and sisters that loved them, and sought to lead them in the paths of righteousness. They are thinking of the companions of their youth, and of the hopes of their childhood. Such memories hover over men as the very ministers of God. And to-night, through the portals of their feelings, their thoughts have been broken up ; and I have a right at this moment of their excitement, to say to them, “Return to the God of your fathers. The Lord Jehovah, he is God—your God.”

As the Jew was touched when God was called the “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel,” so may you well be touched when I remind you of the God of your father, and the God of your mother, and the God that you have loved and departed from. It ought to make life sacred in the retrospect to you.

I bring this God before you to-night, and say to every man who has gone away from him, and broken down his altar, and cast aside all the memorials of the true faith—I bring this God before you, to-night, in this sacred place, and at this solemn hour, and say, “Choose ye whom ye will serve. If God, and heaven, and eternity be true, then turn your face to God, and give your heart to him, and begin to serve him without hesitation ; but if those gods that represent the great thundering phantasmagoria of solicitation and lust be true, then turn your face to them, and give your heart to them, and begin to serve them without hesitation.

I build again, to-night, the old altar for you ; I call down the

sacred fire of inspiration upon your hearts ; and I implore every one of you not to delay to choose. Do not wait till the congregation breaks up, nor till the shadows of evening darken into night. Now, and here, I say, slay the prophets that have led you wrong. Destroy those pleasures, and that business, and those seductions which have enticed you away from your early faith in God. Kill them here, and stand up, and say, "The Lord Jehovah is my God, and henceforth I will serve him."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WHAT are we, what are our offerings, that we should bring them before the Lord of heaven and earth? Wert thou not our Father, wert thou only the Judge and the King, we should not dare to come into thy presence; but thou hast made us. We were not made subject to vanity willingly, but by the will of Him that created us. Thou hast blessed us on earth, and surrounded us by all the things that we are working upon. We are known by thee in all our weaknesses, and necessities, and trials, and temptations. Before the generations came forth, while yet they were afar off, thou didst discern their wants and needs, and didst have compassion towards them.

O Lord, we rejoice that we may come to thee by the way of love and trust, if we cannot come by the way of merit. By faith we draw near to thee—that faith which works by love. We rejoice in thy power,—so much of it as we can perceive,—and in those supreme motives which direct even divine power; for thou art seeking everywhere to fulfill thy beneficence. Yea, and all suffering, all sorrow, all sighing, all tears, all groans, which shall go to swell the anthem of trouble in the universe shall yet be overcome by thee. For thou hast not made darkness to forever shut out the light. Thou hast not made the spirit of holiness that it should be trodden under foot. By and by thou wilt set thy Son on the hill of Zion, and proclaim him Sovereign over all creation. All knees shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, to the glory of God.

We rejoice in all the intimations which thou hast given us of the future. When we look back to see what thou hast done since the times of the fathers, and what is the state in which we dwell, of privilege, and knowledge, and impulse in things right, we marvel at the greatness of the work which hath been accomplished, and we chide our impatience and doubt. We wonder at thy delay, O Lord our God; but grant that we may draw from all the events of the past, arguments of hope in the future. Roll on thy victorious chariot still toward light and knowledge. Still raise up the nations to morality by the power of holiness.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that all those who sit in darkness may see the light coming toward them, the star of the morning rising, the twilight dawning, the day breaking.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to all those who are laboring in thy providence, in every direction,—to those who search for the secrets of God hidden in outward nature, to those who are examining into the ways of men and the processes of human life for the divine methods, and to those who are studying the records of the past, and teaching from them,—we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to all such thy wisdom and guidance. We beseech of thee that thou wilt bring them into unity and sympathy. And as they all serve God in fulfilling their duty toward men, so may they be workers together with God, not only in the development of truth, but in its application.

We pray for the amelioration of manners; for purity of conduct; for more noble ideals of manhood; and for a more faithful discharge of public duties.

We pray that thou wilt look upon the household, and purify it; upon all the ways of business, and purge them; upon the ways of public procedure, and deliver them from greediness, and mad ambition, and every form of corruption.

We pray that thou wilt grant that this great commonwealth, lying abroad upon the continent, may be strong, not in its riches, not in its external power, but in the strength of God. And we pray that humanity may be more and more perfectly understood in all its applications and relations.

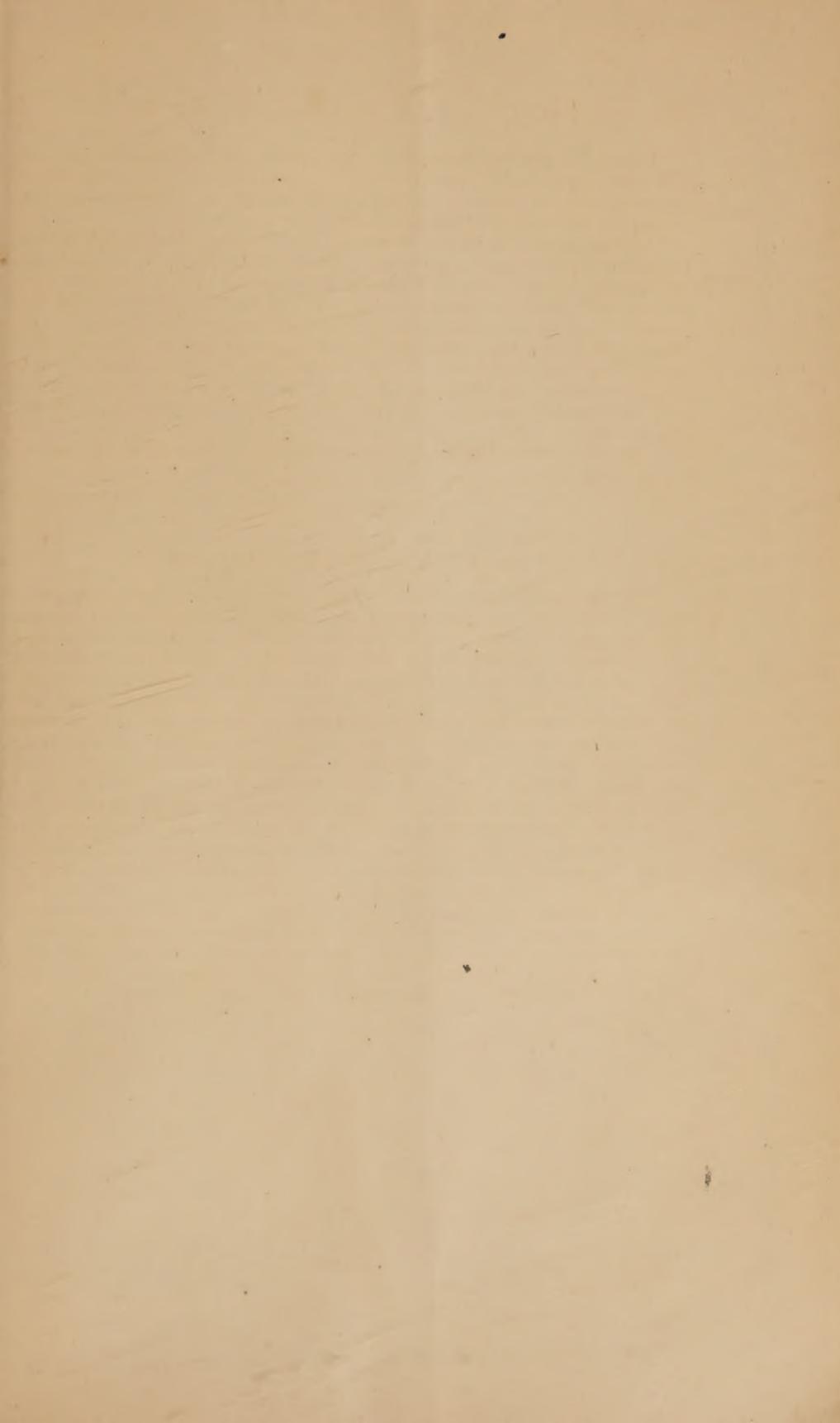
Lift the light of thy countenance, we pray thee, upon this great people, and make them fit instruments to guide other nations to true liberty and real virtue, by the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and by the love of God which is the end thereof.

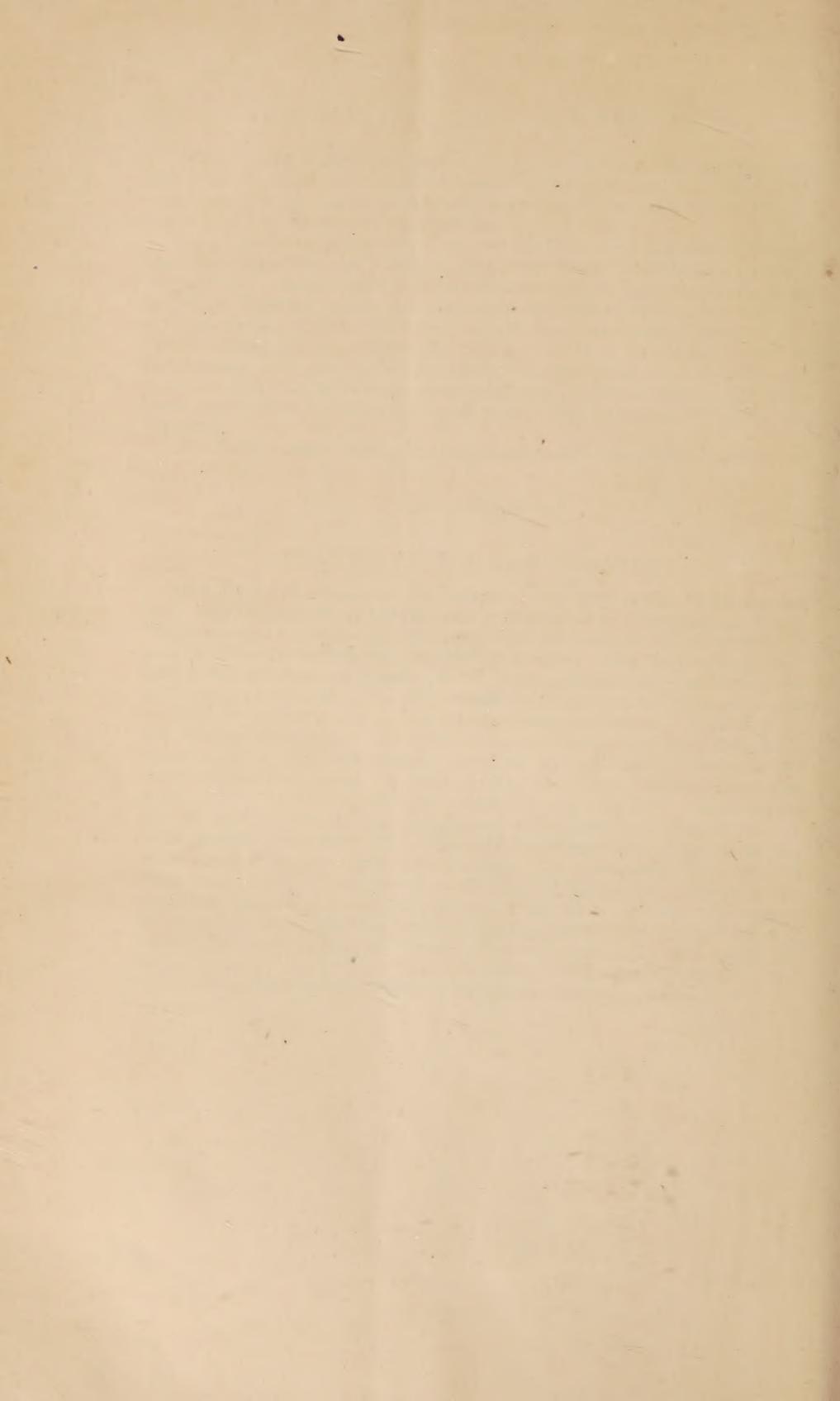
And we pray that thou wilt grant that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon those who are preaching thy word everywhere, to-day, at home and abroad. Grant that all who, in far distant lands, and in the islands of the sea, are making known the unsearchable riches of Christ, may feel thy presence; and may thy breath be breathed upon them as the breath of life. We pray that the time may come when there shall be no more need of threatenings and judgments. Grant that the day of reason, and faith, and love, and universal helpfulness may dawn, that the new heaven and the new earth may appear, and that God may rejoice with everlasting joy over his creatures.

And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be the praise. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we beseech thee that thou wilt bless the word of instruction. May the histories of the past throw their light down upon the present. May we rejoice to see how far we have traveled from the early rudeness of men; how far knowledge has brought us forward. May we also remember that, as our privileges are greater, so are our responsibilities; and that if we fall from the height which we have reached, our fall will be the greater, and we shall be dashed to pieces. Grant that there may be some here to-night who shall turn themselves away from evil, away from all forms of seduction, away from the world as a contaminator, and go back again to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls—to the Lord God who loves, to Jesus Christ who saves, and to the Holy Spirit who enlightens and sanctifies. Bring in, we beseech of thee, the children of prayer. Bring back the wanderers, who have forsaken their first love. Bring out, we beseech thee, from the households, those who have forgotten to pray. Oh, grant that there may be many hearts in which there shall be the light of faith again. May there be many families in which the altars shall be built up once more. May there be many who shall cease from world-idolatry, and world-worship, and self-seeking, and seek purity, and truth, and honor, and virtue, and faith, and love—the very love of Jesus Christ. We ask these things in his name. And to the Father and the Spirit shall be the praise, evermore. *Amen.*





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